

Animal Kingdom

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Category: Naruto
Genre: Drama, Romance
Language: English
Characters: Sakura H.
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2011-07-09 06:35:23
Updated: 2011-07-09 06:35:23
Packaged: 2016-04-26 11:47:30
Rating: T
Chapters: 1
Words: 11,857
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: A nightmare in Sakura's opinion would be the mafia wanting her dead. Unfortunately, they just want her. Modern UchihaSaku.

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To anyone who's read my work before, remember how The Night Under used to be my biggest undertaking ever? Lol it still is. But this can put up a damn good fight for "story which I had to tear my hair out in order to write." I don't think I will ever top The Night Under, though, and its literary quality? Idk.

Anyway. This modern-setting work was first planted into my head when I watched a particular scene in the fantastic movie, _Catch Me If You Can. _One scene in the movie warped into a SasuSaku encounter in my mind which I so badly wanted to write that encounter will come eventually, but that is a long way off yet.

Okay this takes place in America, mostly because I think America does a better job of presenting its Mafia as a threatening force (at least in movies, etc; I honestly don't hear of them in real life news). The Japanese yakuza is used in so many comedic, silly anime that they are no longer a force to be reckoned with in my head, so we're going to America now! This means that you will encounter many American/English characters, but the main characters are all Japanese immigrants or descended from such. Japanese will still be spoken on occasion, and, in America as we now are, this will be considered exotic.

Also, if you weren't aware before, there will eventually be dumb/romantic/crack/obsessive UchihaSaku going on. BEWARE.

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><p>The Scene of the Crime. Wednesday, April 8th, 6:43:093 PM<p>

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><p>"and another hundred from Murro. That'll be the last of it."<p>

"'Another hundred' doesn't at all equal the hundred and eighty-six he owes."

"Punishment?"

"Find his nephew, the chef. Murro can have a picture of what's coming his way. I want bones to break through the skin. Shisui?"

"Not a problem, sir. Could do it by tonight and have time to relax before Idol."

"I've no qualms with his being warned by tonight. Now, Madara, there's a shipment of new vials due at eleven. Go to meet it. You're going to be the deliveryman and bring it through the last leg of the way. I trust your strength to move through any presented obstacles. You, adjust the heat! It's cold in here."

"Shall I be accepting any transactions this week, Father? Preferably from Cooper?"

"Ah, you've taken a liking to Cooper's products?"

"He does very good business with us. I don't see why we haven't absorbed him yet."

"Because his business is still growing. Absorb when there is substance to be absorbed, son. Now, Sasuke" Sasuke?"

"What?"

"Feeling distracted? I wonder by what?"

"Distracted by the capo there. His scar. I presume that's from the warning given to Johansson four days ago, right? I heard he fought back, and it was humiliating."

"| "

"Now, Fugaku, you're forgetting the prize you obtained in return for the scar and humiliation Roland got. Nine pounds of fresh material."

"Aaaaannd, saved by the wife!"

"Madara, for god's sake" "

"Sasuke was in a car accident today, you know."

"What!"

"Itachi" "

"Pardon me for caring, _otouto. _I'll stop tomorrow, I promise."

"Sasuke, is he telling the truth?"

"You better not lie to your mama. She'll hack into the traffic cameras and nail your ass."

"Yes, I was in a wreck on Charleston Street around noon. I made an amateur driver's mistake and didn't turn sharply enough, and hit someone in another lane. But I got the car fixed in a few hours and I wasn't hurt, and no one was with me. But I could have sworn we were just talking about this week's gross product."

"Well, we've got nothing left to talk about, at least until Madara comes back with the cargo. I want you to go see Luciani before you go home and get a checkupâ€"don't give me that face. Thorpe, make sure he goes."

"I'm _going, _Father."

"â€|Itachi. I want you to have your brother followed tomorrow. He didn't make an amateur turn, I'm quite sure, and it's doubtful he lost control of the car. Check the city traffic cameras from the time of his accident."

"I will."

"Fugaku, I'll be heading off to see Murro's nephew now!"

"Good, Shisui. And Madara?"

"Are you sure I can't go and see the nephew, too? I love giving warnings to scum."

"I said you're the deliveryman, and that's what you'll be. Now, by midnight tonight all business shall be finished for now. But more is coming, my boys. Always more."

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><p>The Scene of the Healer. Wednesday, April 8th, 3:22:403 AM<p>

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><p>The past two nights had been sleepless, an occurrence which she had secretly grown to expect once in a while, what with her career choice and her state of mind. But tonight the exhaustion and the frustration that came with staying awake for twenty hours were much more apparent than usual, and her coworker, Alexandra, was completely oblivious to it. Sakura was just drained enough to think nothing of running her through like a goddamned tank.<p>

She had enough politeness left to not say _exactly _that. "Alexandra, if you don't get out of the way your broken corpse is gonna come to the O.R. splattered across the stretcher."

"I just said to wait!" her coworker insisted again. Alexandra, at the front end of the stretcher, tried to push it backward, back down the hallway from which it had been pushed at juggernaut speed. Sakura, at

the opposite end, felt her hackles rise and all her rage come to a hot point.

"Are you insane? He'll bleed to death! James, give me that anesthesia syringe. Did you put the ten milliliters of hydromorphone in it?"

Alexandra only pushed harder on the stretcher—"Sakura! Come on, you have to"—and its burden, a bleeding man in his mid-thirties, gasped suddenly. He began shuddering and groaning, and the blood from his gaping, ugly wound began to drip off the stretcher and down its metal legs. Sakura swooped from the front of the stretcher to its side and made sure the man saw her. "Breathe deeply. Daniel! Breathe deeply, all right? Now, don't touch the wound. "

A male nurse named James drifted unsurely closer to his younger pink-haired coworker, just close enough for her to snatch the syringe out of his hands and plunge it strongly into the patient's arm.

Daniel's eyes turned wide as a startled hind's; all the nurses and students watched him shudder and drop his head onto the stretcher's pillow again. Alexandra's jaw dropped.

Sakura took advantage of her moment of disbelief to push on the stretcher again and slam her coworker right in her pierced belly button. Alexandra fell out of the way like a bowling pin, which was very satisfying, but there was no time to dwell on her. Once the blonde woman was out of range, Sakura heaved forward and her natural strength soon had the weighted stretcher tearing down the remainder of the hallway like a racehorse. At the far end, the OR doors stood open, and were being held by two techs, Dexter and Debra.

Alexandra shouted that she was breaking code but was paid no mind. The stretcher made it to the threshold of the doors and she at last let the stretcher and Daniel out of her grip, and felt the familiar and uncomfortable pull of letting a charge of hers leave her care. But the knowledge that he was going to be healed was enough to make her let go, so she watched Dexter pull him through another set of doors into the actual operating room, where sterilized and outfitted surgeons waited with a replacement liver.

Once those doors were shut, she backed out quickly, being unsterilized, and Debra came out with her, pulling at the hem of her scrubs. Sakura unconsciously rubbed the arm of her red blouse, and quietly nursed secret, grateful thoughts about how lucky she was to not have to wear those, being a student.

Debra complimented her on her Olympic dashing, but it only made Sakura realize how tired she was, how she now felt like a person in some other woman's dream. Her steps were a little wobbly, steps of a person aware of their legs speaking the perfect English phrase up to their burden of a torso, "I'm not gonna do this shit anymore."

Just then, Alexandra came up, and to Sakura's tired eyes she was a ruffled blonde vulture, with her red lipstick suddenly becoming bleeding teeth. "What the fuck were you thinking?" she hissed. The pinkette's ears rang from the ugly noise and Debra took the opportunity to back out of the coming confrontation. "I had a direct order from Doctor Hoffman to wait for a second anesthesia syringe

before you got that guy into the OR. He'll find out that you didn't do it! I'll tell him! And what if the patient wakes up during the surgery?"

"He won't because anesthesia is applied many times _during _a surgery, Alexandra." Sakura told her with a sigh. She felt the university's collective shame at having such brainless interns this year. Hopkins had a reputation to keep and people like Alexandra were just shitting on it. "Hoffman's not thinking straight because it's three in the morning and his wife just had twins, so working a night shift is as close to sleep as he can get."

"Miss King! Sakura!" Sakura looked up rather like a surprised dog at the sound of Professor Tsunade's voice, and turned to face it a little excitedly. Alexandra glowered behind her.

The professor came strolling down the hallway with hardly a glimmer of tiredness in her features, and by the time she reached the two, Sakura was standing straighter, had smoothed her hair and pretended that she was not at all exhausted, while Alexandra merely frowned. "Miss King, Sakura's right. Mister Hoffman is exhausted beyond belief right now and he is aware of his mistake of asking Sakura to wait for more anesthesia. Go back to your shift anâ€"

The professor told Alexandra a few more things, but to Sakura they sounded like noises from underwater. She watched Alexandra strut away with fuzzy black holes on her clothes and floating around her.

The professor spoke to her again; this Sakura only knew because she found herself shocking her mind into wakefulness again. "I think you're done for the night. Forget about the next half hour, you can go home now."

This took a few moments to register, especially since they sounded the slightest bit muffled. "Are you sure? I can finish the shift. You know I can."

"Yeah, I know. Go home, Sakura. Tomorrow's lecture doesn't start till noon, so you have time to sleep. Okay?"

"â€|Okay."

"Okay. Now get out of here."

Before getting out, Sakura went to the locker room to retrieve her purse and iPod, and freshened up slightly in front of the mirrors before she left. Her mind began playing random flashbacksâ€the drive to the university hospital on her first day of college last year, her last customer at work, Shikamaru texting her "I got into Harvard" at the end of senior yearâ€merely for the purpose of having something to do so it wouldn't shut down completely.

She also began to relive the night's shift as well, from the intervals of running upstairs to write charts and then downstairs to hand out medications, to Hannah losing track of a package of dopamine, to her own almost-constant irritation at workers like Alexandra who really didn't give a shit that working here defended and saved human lives, a passion of hers throughout her life. Causing violence to rain down upon people like that, or rather just punching or cussing out immoral idiots, was also a passion of hers, but that

is neither here nor there. .

What _was _relevant was one of tonight's patients, one Daniel Musgrave, a tourist who had the awful luck to be shot while walking back from some sightseeing. He had been in and out of delirium for a day, shivering and murmuring to himself whenever conscious due to a fear of hospitals. During her free time today, she had come down here to educate him about the treatments he was getting, using as many metaphors and silly whiteboard drawings as possible, under the reasoning that, if he knew more about them, they would be less mysterious and potentially evil. Daniel thanked her profusely for that, no matter his state of consciousness. His one hundred percent genuine gratitude brought Sakura one of the feelings that made it worth it to her to pursue a career in medicine.

So naturally, when his insanity reached critical mass and Daniel found a knife and tore out his own liver, Sakura was the first to jump into action for him. Doctor Selano sent her a pageâ€" "I've got a replacement liver, bring him to OR"â€"when she was already speeding through the halls, pushing Daniel's stretcher at light speed.

She was happy to do it, to rush him to safety, and was content to just deal with the fact that it left her so tired that she might just faint and fall on her face on her way to the parking garage. If her luck held, no one would be there to see that faceplant.

She left the locker room and was concentrating on walking in a straight, straight line and wasn't at all looking at anyone who might be in her way. Therefore, Sakura only barely registered the old man sitting in a chair in this wing's waiting area. He wore a suit and tie and looked like he was still doing proper business despite his age. She liked his tie. She'd had a dream about suits and ties last week, actually. They talked and walked and sat on an elephant's back and asked why six was afraid of seven (â€|eight, nine, she thought).

Dreams, however, were the last thing she wanted to think about. The darkest ones kept her up at night.

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><p>The Scene of the Liar, Thursday, April 9th, 11:32:445 PM<p>

* * *

><p>"Sit here. Ignore Rembrandt, he's totally stoned."<p>

"Diver Dan got hit! Get 'im! Get 'im to the Batcave! Diver Dan!"

"Yeah. I see. Okay, anyway, I'm hoping you got the hint of what I said on the phone. I couldn't exactly say what I meant since I think my cell might be tapped."

"It's tapped but you were okay with hinting?"

"It's tapped, but it's tapped by an oblivious dumbass. And what I was hinting at but couldn't say was that I've been looking for a way to shoot down them big cats."

"Kay, man. I'm listening. But first, let me just make this quick call to Abe Lincoln."

"Fuck, listen to me! I _know _there's a way. I know there's some leak in their system. They're the perfect family and they do the perfect business, our _dream _business, and that shit just can't happen for real. There's a flaw they're hiding, and I'll find it. I've got this guy called Thorpe who's one of their associates, who can spy for me."

"And why do you want to do this again? You know if they send out some guys after you, I'm not gonna cover you and neither is anybody else who knows shit about 'em."

"Because they're tyrants, Greg. Ruling and lording over everything and families starve under their noses. They control who gets put away in jail and who walks, 'cause they've got a guy who works as a cop in the city, and fuck, if that ain't pulling the most two-faced trick I've ever seen! They control when the best stocks go up and down, 'cause they got three men sitting in Wall Street law boards. Theyâ€" "

"I get it. Tyrants. What are you gonna do?"

"Diiiver Dan! Where's Diver Dan! I think the sharks shot him!"

"â€|If Aquaman here would shut his goddamn faceâ€|then I'll tell you that what I plan to do is ask for help. I'm gonna go to the end of Ninetieth Boulevard."

"For fuck's sake, Troy, the rattlesnake lives there."

"I know."

* * *

><p>The Scene of the Duo, Friday, April 10th, 8:24:49 AM<p>

* * *

><p>â€"Barbie girl! In a Barbie wo-orld!

After sleeping off three exhausting classes in a row, a Barbie song was the last thing most people would want to hear. There was only one person in her contact list who had that ringtone assigned to them, and there was no reason for them to be awake at eight twenty-four in the morning.

In the middle of re-reading her homework, Sakura fetched her phone from her bedroom, tapped the "talk" button and sighed, "What do you want so early in the morning?"

"To _shop_," Ino said, and popped her lips on the last letter like a bubble. "You remember that time you said you would let me take you out shopping? In _February_?"

She did. She recalled her being very clever in distracting Ino with an offhand comment about Johnny Depp, which she predictably clung onto and forgot her desires and thoughts of the time. "Ugh, yeah. I

thought I managed to distract you from it."

"Well, I just woke up to get a drink of water and it came back to me! You, me, clothes, and a lunch stop at Olive Garden on my credit card. It. Shall. Happen."

At this, Sakura sighed again. Ino was blonde, easily distracted, and had given away her virginity prior to graduating high school, but she very much understood the art of luring targets, and with that, the art of saying just the right words. And, oddly, Sakura did not feel up to starting a bitchfight with her or anybody else right now. She replied almost passively, "I wanted a peaceful day off, Ino. Professor Tsunade took us downstairs from the classrooms to the university hospital yesterday, and I was on my feet from noon to ten at night."

"Aw, I'm a gonna be a doctor when I grow up, I have to do work, nyah nyah nyah bitch bitch whine whine!"

"_I _bitch and whine? Excuse me, you littleâ€"

"Can we take your car, though? Mine's in the shop till tonight. I can see your frowny face from my house, Sakura! Come on!"

The JCPenny down in the city came to mind. The gorgeous mint-green blouse with delicate white straps she'd seen in the catalogue, or the pink sundress with soft hem frills, perfect for spring or upcoming summer, both of which she'd fantasized about wearing on her morning walks. No need to tell Ino about that, though. "Okay. Okay. But I get to have the rest of my morning to relax! I'll come to your place at eleven, and for goodness' sake, we aren't going out of state this time."

"Awesome! I love ya, you nerd."

"I love you too, ho." And she hung up quick, before any whining (and lying) reply could come.

Until ten-forty, Sakura spent her morning wandering about her apartment, taking her time to organize this and that, sit on her apartment balcony and re-read the article, briefly sing along to a song on her iPod. She also did a quick morning stretch to prepare for the sprinting that would be required to catch up with Ino.

An unfortunately fast couple hours later, two college students were busily rushing from store to store in the city, and mountain climbing, too, it could be said. After all, shopping with Ino was similar to it; it was a long and potentially dangerous affair with lots of fear and physical exertion involved. Also, you had to carry a lot of heavy shit. And Ino tended to return a lot of it anyway, once she finished her obsessive phase of owning and dominating an object for two hours.

Sakura made a comment that afternoon about how oddly similar that sounded to a prostitute, and did she not finger and fondle most of her new things, too? And did they ask for more, God, yes, more? Ino grinned and said something sing-songy about virgins who ought not talk about things they don't understand, which prompted Sakura to say something having to do with smacking a ho onto the ground where she belonged. Such went the interactions of friends who had known each

other since the tender age of seven.

They had driven Sakura's car from their old and pleasant suburb town, Wellspring, to the neighboring city, and were walking through all the needlessly expensive and flashy stores the concrete jungle had to offer. They had been to three stores and had four sizable bags between them. Ino had taken out her new hairtie with a connected, glittering bumblebee charm and attached it to her hair. It wiggled and flipped on her ponytail as she looked left and right for a new hunting grounds.

She half-turned to Sakura, dodging around a crowd of schoolchildren, and called, "Look, on the opposite side! Let's go there!" She made for the crosswalk and tried to press the button on the traffic light pole.

Seeing Ino eager and waiting to go into a store was a dear and familiar sight to Sakura. She jogged lightly to catch up and pressed the button with two fingers of her free hand. "Thank goodness you didn't try to get it with your foot." Ino knew which memory from junior high she was referencing and muttered something very unfriendly under her breath.

They waited for traffic to stop and for the little white walking man to appear on the pole. Sakura swung her bag the slightest bit, feeling oddly happy on this adventure. She looked to her right and observed the people, their clothes and smiles and laughter. A dog here and there, one or two faint puffs of music from someone's iPod behind her, an instrumental and exciting tune. She knew it, _knew _that she knew it, but could not quite place it, an irritating state of mind to be in.

As she was deciding that it was quite possibly the How To Train Your Dragon score, Sakura realized out of the corner of her eye, she could see perfect white circles that meant someone's direct gaze was squarely on her. She immediately flicked her eyes up to meet it.

The person was standing with his hands in his pockets across the intersection, at the top-right corner of the square to her bottom-left position. It was a young man who caught Sakura's eye unlike any young manâ€"or older man, she musedâ€"ever had before. Black hair, bangs almost in his eyes, eyes which one may have dismissed as a typical dark brown, while Sakura decided they were black as well. Literally black eyes were impossible from any logical or medical standpoint, but Sakura knew how to accept pink hair and so could accept black eyes, too. Her eyes trailed over long legs, a lean torso, and a tasteful dress shirt with a loose tie.

The How To Train Your Dragon score behind her provided some misplaced background music to this analysis, and it carried her mind lazily about as a softly rocking boat. He was rather leanâ€"and the way he stood, he looked a little proudâ€"and the music reminded her of flying, and running, and he looked like he could run. He could have run track in his high school days. Somehow the thought of this young man running made her a little giddy.

'_Run track. Running track. Dashing. Dasher, like the reindeer,'_ she thought.

She smiled at this. She stopped smiling when she realized they had

both been staring at each other for an uncomfortable ten seconds and he probably thought she was weird. Thankfully, Ino was pulling at her to cross now, and she broke the young man's gaze ("Dasher's" gaze) quickly and readily. If he did think she was some kind of creeper, then he could dash on over here on his one-horse open sleigh and say so.

Three hours of walking and lifting weights later, Ino declared herself (and by proxy, Sakura, too) too hungry to walk any further, and it was now time for a visit to Olive Garden. They each had a platter of spaghetti and almost orgasmic breadsticks, which made a excellent end to a tiring day. Or it would have been, without the final event of the night.

It began with the drive towards Ino's mechanic, where her car was waiting. Sakura drove. Two blocks away from the shop, a blur of green, too well-disguised in the night, rammed into them.

Their heads crashed against the dashboard and bled, and their minds drifted away.

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><p>The Scene of the Reveal, Friday, April 10th, 7:45:036 PM<p>

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><p>"There you are, *anata*. Massey let slip that you'd come up to my study for some reason."

"As I told him to. Come sit. I wanted to talk to you about something."

"Talk? Drat, I thought I was led up here to be seduced and deflowered."

"That's my secret plan, koi, but only after you learn something very interesting about our son."

"Do you mean about Sasuke and his crash? Or has Itachi done something? What's wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong, don't fret. It's Sasuke, and it is about his crash, but nothing is wrong. In fact, it's an incredible development for him. He lied about his being distracted the other day. It wasn't the capo's scar that made his mind drift. It was something he saw just before he hit the other car."

"â€|?"

"Something odd and interesting indeedâ€|it was unmistakable; a traffic camera doesn't exactly have great resolution, but there's no doubt this is what he was looking at across the streetâ€|"

"For God's sake, just tell me."

"He looked across the street and saw a girl. Sasuke crashed his car because his eye was caught by a pretty girl."

"You'reâ€|you're kidding."

"No. I'm sure. And it certainly wasn't the whorish type from our neck of the woods. It wasn't another boss's lapgirl or pleasure slave. It was a lovely, sharp-looking girl, carrying a little bag with a Hopkins logo on it."

"Really. Really!"

"Yong and Kendall did a search on her for me, and found some remarkable credentials. Sasuke chose a very impressive young woman to crash a car for."

"Do you think this will go anywhere?"

"_Koi, _what I thinkâ€"Varda. You are to knock before entering my wife's study. You know that."

"I apologize greatly, sir, and I know I am intruding, but Hakudori is back. He has a new client with him who claims to have information on the new Kingdom."

"I see. Mikoto, excuse me."

"Of course."

* * *

><p>The Scene of the Connection, Friday, April 10th, 8:02:557 PM<p>

* * *

><p>"You dumb bitch! You blind, dumb bitch!"<p>

The man outside Sakura's window was yelling obscenity after obscenity at her, as though she was fully awake and would hear him, as though she didn't have her face buried in an airbag that had come up almost too late to save her a broken nose. Wearily she sat up and unconsciously brushed her hair down.

She did not look at him first, but at Ino, and her gaze alighted on every dark patch of the blonde's skin that might have been a shadow and might have been a vastly damaging cut or wound. But each shadow was nothing but a shadow no matter how hard Sakura examined it or ghosted her fingertips over it. Ino had no cuts, no awkwardly angled limbs, or even any heavy, halting breaths. She was all right, so now the stranger had to be dealt with.

It was a thirty-odd-year-old man in a baseball cap whose teeth (only bottom teeth, it seemed) were abhorrently yellowed. He still had yet to cease calling her a dumb bitch. Sakura opened her car door and the man yelped at the object slamming into his side. She stood up straight, or tried to, but only managed to hold on to the car door and stand weakly. Her fingers curled in brief shame at this; Sakura had always deeply disliked looking weak in front of someone who was a complete dumbshit. The dumbshit before her had not stopped talking, and Sakura's patience, not a great amount to begin with, began to wear.

"Finally, are you awake? Didn't you see I had the right of way?"

Sakura briefly took in the details she could see out of the corners of her eyes—their location on the edge of an intersection by Blockbuster's, a police car parked nearby, the darkness in the sky—and went back to his rant. "It was my fucking turn and you and your girlfriend just decide to get in my way? What the hell's up with college sluts these days, they just don't know!"

"_Shut_ up!" she spat, curling her fingers again, now in blazing irritation. "What are you talking about? _We_ _had_ the right of way and _we_ _were_ making a legal left turn. It's much more likely you hit us. And even if you didn't, we need to swap insurance information."

"I'm not swapping shit till you see what you did to my car and you pay for it!" He pointed to the left and Sakura's vision was immediately taken up by the man's modest sedan that had its crushed nose nuzzling the corner of her car's. Her slightly aged little blue Honda that had taken her through high school and over a year of college, never in an accident before, now carried the mark of a punk redneck who had been given a driver's license by sheer luck. The hood was ruined. It would take a thousand dollars or more to fix that mess. The man with nasty teeth was still yelling, and Sakura ached to rain violence down upon him.

"Will you just stop?" she snapped at him, and he stopped in the middle of the phrase "mechanic bills." "You screaming at me isn't going to make me or anybody pay for your car. Please give me your insurance information so we can get this fixed."

Nasty Teeth had no tolerance for people he deemed unfamiliar or overbearingly smart. With both concepts in one before him, he started up again. "I just told you that there's no freaking way I'm giving my information to a college slut like you! I already called the police on your pretty little ass and when they get here, you better _hope_ _you_ got some rich dad to cover up your mistake."

This morning's odd mood was very clearly gone. Sakura was feeling up to fighting for herself again, and if this guy didn't shut up, she would. So she said, "You called them to arrest me for a mistake that you probably made? They're gonna laugh at you when they get here. And then get your insurance info."

"Insurance, insurance, do you know any other goddamn words?"

"I know 'shut your damned mouth,' and I can spell it, too. Can you?"

Nasty Teeth bared all his teeth and all his aged Tic-tac breath. "Don't you insult me. I don't need to take that crap from a dumb whore like you."

Her bare fist flew, connected with a brilliant, satisfying force, and Nasty Teeth suddenly had two less teeth.

"Guahh!" he shouted. "Crazy fucking bitch! I'll press charges!" And he immediately lunged back with both hands open. Idiot hands, Sakura knew, "If I charge with my arms open and up like a retarded bear, I can win" hands_. _She gave no mercy to idiots.

With both arms up, it was easy to get in another punch straight at

the man's chest. She didn't expect him to slam an arm down towards her face. He struck her with a blow that was part slap and part punch, and made her bite her own tongue till it bled. She staggered to the side and fell onto her car's crooked hood. The man came again; she lifted one leg and kicked him hard in his thigh and heard his jagged cry of pain. And it would be a long time coming before she admitted her possibly righteous delight at beating people like this into the ground.

"Hey! Hey!" the man shouted, or did he? Sakura looked at his mouth and saw his teeth clenched. He couldn't have yelled. But he was attacking her again already and she couldn't think much more.

He called her a bitch again, an insane bitch and she'd be locked up for this for fucking sure but Sakura punched him twice more and he shut up. He still didn't stop, though. They both prepared to attack each other again, but a mass of dark blue got in their way and shoved them both back. It was a cop, a well-muscled one to boot, with narrowed and wise eyes and dark skin surely of Indian origin. He understood some of this, and would listen, so the pinkette halted her movements and left the rest of her beating to play out in her mind.

"Mr. Mitchell! Mr. Mitchell! I said to leave them alone."

"When did you say that?" Sakura couldn't help but mutter.

"When you and your friend were still unconscious in the airbags, ma'am." The officer replied, with one arm extended warily at Nasty Teeth Mitchell. "You were starting to wake up, and I had Mr. Mitchell stay in his car, but it looks like things have escalated in the last two minutes."

"This little bitch just started whaling on me." Mr. Mitchell complained. "Punched me right the fuck out of nowhere. I gotta go home and show this to my wife, how do you think that's gonna turn out?" Sakura quietly growled and glared at him.

When the officer—"Officer Kumal"—asked for her side of the story, Sakura ran a hand through her hair before calmly relaying just what she had told Mr. Mitchell. The officer then told her, "Well, I can't just take you both to a mechanic's. You know I have to take you down to the station for assault and battery."

'_Assault and battery assault assault battery and assault on my record that can't happen to me.' _

What!" Ino cried from the passenger's seat. "But that guy totally deserved it! Do you see his stupid redneck face? He's got 'I Love Disturbing The Peace' all over him!"

Before the redneck could apply, Officer Kumal said, "Ma'am, while I called in my partner he gave me details of Mr. Mitchell's record and what kind of trouble he gets into. I'm pretty confident your friend was just defending herself and we'll be done with you in an hour, and him in a couple weeks. But the law says I have to take you in anyway." The two young women drooped and let their hopes fly away in great sighs while Mitchell continued griping and spitting to himself. Nearby, traffic went seamlessly by, ignorant of them.

Officer Kumal took the women's names and called them in, broadcasting their names to all listeners of the police channel on his walkie-talkie. He then asked them all to enter his vehicle, with Mitchell in front. He assured them their cars would be towed away to a safe place. Ino took all their shopping bags out of the car while Sakura struggled to say goodbye to it.

Kumal held the back door open for Sakura. She stared at it for a moment, at the prospect of entering a police car for punishment of misdemeanor, which was absolutely wrong and would shame her for the rest of her life. Ino gave her a gentle push and she crawled meekly in. The ride was silent and subdued. Only Mitchell talked and it was only to insist that he call his friend about a card game he was missing.

When they entered the police station, Kumal herded them in from behind into a tiny lobby enclosed on three sides by glass and one side by the wall and front doors. Beyond the glass were dozens of desks and computers and paper piles and men and women in blue, a hundred items and people protecting justice and fighting the scum of the city. Any other day, Sakura would have been fascinated with, even jealous of, such honorable work. But she was here as scum tonight and could not have felt lower. Kumal once glanced at her and found himself looking at the face of a wounded kitten. When his phone rang, he answered it almost gratefully, and spoke to a swift voice on the other end that was not-so-subtly hiding urgency or even desperation.

Once he got off, he knocked on the glass to get the attention of a coworker, who dragged Mitchell through a door to one of the many desks beyond the glass. Kumal took them through the massive room and into a hallway at the back, asked Ino to wait on a bench there, and directed Sakura to one of the hall's connecting rooms. It was the size of her bedroom, if one guessed generously, and contained nothing but a gray, rectangular table and two metal chairs.

"Another officer will be coming down from Winterset to talk with you. He's almost here," Officer Kumal told her. "Please sit down and don't worry about having a criminal record or something, okay? Everyone here already knows Mitchell as the town douchebag. I can already see the blame going rightfully to him."

Smiling at this, Sakura watched the door close and sat down at the opposite side of the table so she would see him come in through the door. _'Good cop or bad cop?' _she wondered idly. _'Bad, probably. If he's coming from as far as Winterset, then he'll be pissed at such a long drive for something so trivial.' _

Bad cop. Bad boy, her mind supplied. It was, now and rather often, hungry for music for the current situation. It pondered the possible outcomes of this night, whilst singing. A bad cop, bad boy, was coming, and whatcha gonna do when they come for you?"

The lights went off, and one lone pinkette was left in absolute darkness. She stilled and almost didn't breathe, and heard the sounds of the surprised and irritated police officers nearby. Already the room was filling with zombies and monsters and other such nightmares that people felt were, but knew were really not, in a dark room with them. She almost welcomed them as a distraction from the horror of this situation, how it might mar her future: Sakura Haruno, M.D.,

prestigious diagnostician, once arrested for assault and battery.

'_All my hard work. All my life. It's gone.'_

The door opened, thank God, except that the door let it no light. Only by squinting did she see the faint outline of a person, a man, by its height and build. He spoke to her, with a very fine voice. "Sakura? Are you here?"

She lifted her head, gathering some fallen dignity, and said smoothly, "Yes. I'm here. And who are you?"

At first he didn't answer, as though he didn't know what to say, or he felt cornered. But after a moment or two he said, "Wellâ€|let me pull the old 'use my phone for everything' trick," and while he started making little shuffling sounds, Sakura's brows furrowed at his amused, almost playful tone of voice, and how natural it seemed to him. A light appeared then from the glow of his phone. It shone on a rectangular gold badge, which she scrutinized and then accepted as his police badge in all its detail. "I'm Madara," he said.

Madara, she repeated inwardly, and heard the little inflection, the tiny roll of the _r, _which made her curious. And of course the entire name itself was a great clue. She decided to be brave and ask, "_Anata wa Nippon no desu ka?"

If he wasn't Japanese as his name suggestedâ€|which would beâ€|weird and embarrassingâ€|then he certainly wouldn't be able to answer the question a fellow native was asking: whether or not he was Japanese. She heard him exhale briefly, like a little laugh, and he answered, "_Hai, ore wa nipponjindesu._"

'_Really? Really?' _Sakura thought with her mouth slightly parted. _'He really is, how about that!'_

Madara then detailed, still in their languageâ€|and sounding very happyâ€|how he had lived a grand total of one week in Japan before being taken to America with his family, but they spoke the language among each other quite often. And he ended by asking if she was a native as well, or simply well-learned.

Sakura smiled and laughed a little. This was such a pleasant surprise. She told him that she had lived a good seven years over in The Land of the Rising Sun before moving here, but she had kept up her language studies on her own until was fluent enough to satisfy herself. But she popped this little bubble of pleasantries by tacking on at the very end a question of his interview, because she wanted to get it done rather quick, no matter how much it shamed her.

"Yes, yes." Madara said, and she heard him walk over to the table and sit down. He paused again before speaking. Maybe he was nervous. Or just irritated.

"I'm sorry you had to come all the way from Winterset." She said. "I'm not really worth a drive across the entire town."

"Yes, you are." He said very honestly, and Sakura was very confused at his tone. "Why wouldn't I want to come see a young woman who completely decked Trent Mitchellâ€|? I'm not insulting you, love. I

applaud you. He assaulted you, which is six months' jail time, and by God, does he deserve it. I've seen him in here five times this year!"

The comparatively positive comment did not soothe Sakura. She prepared to chill this man's warm humor and said, "I assaulted him first. He was yelling about me having ruined his car, and how I had better pay for it and a bunch of other junk about my general idiocy. I could have just sat in my car and ignored him, but I threw the first punch and knocked out two of his teeth. That's aggravated assault, and battery."

Madara laughed, which made Sakura compulsively curl her fingers. "Yes and no. Assault and battery, yes. I can hear your fears of jail time in your voice, Sakura, and the answer to that is no." Madara said, and she thought she saw a slight movement of his dark head across the table. "Kumal saw Mitchell attacking you. Self-defense against that bear of a man was necessary. You will not be punished for your actions, I swear to you."

"Are you sure about that?"

"Don't you trust a police officer?"

"Why are you the officer who can decide my fate?" she replied. "Where is the paper that proves it? Aren't police very big on cold, hard, beauracratc evidence?"

"That is outside on my coworker's desk. For now, I hope you'll just take my word as a defender of the peace. You, Sakura Haruno, have no criminal record and will not gain one from this incident, I swear to God."

They both paused then, both absorbing the other's words. Silence and blackness together. Sakura broke it with a deeply relieved sigh, and by dropping her head onto her arm with a soft noise of hair on her sleeve. "If that's true thank you. Thank you so much! I would never forgive myself for having a police record. I'm not the sort of person you'll see here five times a year, or ever, if I can help it."

"Hmm. You should tell me what that is. Right after I examine your hands." He added.

"To check for bloodstains?"

"Why, yes. It's a part of our legal policy for any fist-fighting."

Sakura reached quietly into her pocket and found her phone. She clicked a random button on the smooth surface to bring it to life and set it down onto the table so that the white light shone upward. She put out her hands over it, now visible and able to be examined. She glanced across the perfect white space to try and see the officer's face, but could not. She merely saw a part of his torso, and his smile was unknown and unseen to her. He wasn't wearing a police uniform, but something casual with a small but elegant logo drawn on the chest. She squinted at it to try and see if it was familiar, but his hands were coming up towards hers. They touched, and she let him hold her hand.

He pulled her fingers gently down till the knuckles pointed up at him; Sakura had already known he would find faint dots of Mitchell's blood if he looked, but she was not thinking of that right now. She thought instead of what oddly smooth hands he had for a man. He moved her hands around, nudged her fingers and let her fingertips rest on his. She was not the sort of woman who spent much time examining men's hands but for anatomical studies. It felt almost like she was breaking a rule to be thinking of a man in a way that was not anatomical.

"Three drops of blood indeed. And I feel muscles here. And I can see strength in your arms. You're no stranger to tough physical work, I see."

It wasn't the bland compliment of someone who saw her lift a wheelbarrow on her own and spat out nothing but "wow"; it was a compliment with genuine interest inside. To it, she replied, "I'm not a particularly tall or big person, but I do have a lot of muscle. I could probably lift you."

"Pfft. Don't think so."

"Don't you tempt me. I may just go Hulk on you. I have a collected list of witnesses who could give you warnings about picking a fight with me."

"I'm six-two and two hundred pounds, little one. I could sit on you."

"Well, that'd be assaultâ€¦" She meant to say more but dissolved into a small fit of giggling which Madara participated in. Hers lasted a little longer, felt a little warmer, from the presence of someone who could laugh with her. She slid her fingers neatly out of the officer's hand, retreating safely back to her side where it could hum with quiet, strong warmth like the rest of her. Her phone light having gone out, there was no way for her to see the man's fingers stretching out towards her, unwilling for their companion to be gone.

"What sort of work do you and your muscle do, Sakura?"

Well, what work didn't she do? "I used to carry my friends up and down the street when I was young. For my first job, I had to push giant crates of books around for my dad. And I played soccer in high school; I could outrun a good many people. I also spent a lot of time carrying a lot of hefty books around."

"You're aâ€¦med student, then?" He asked.

"Wanted to be since elementary school. I'm about done with my first year at Hopkins."

"Hopkins!" he repeated, and she bloomed a little at the obvious admiration. But she said no more. "You didn't sound exactly finished with the list of physical." Madara noted.

"I don't really wanna dwell on the negative side of physical work. It got me in trouble a few times."

There was a little sliding sound. He had leaned a little closer

across the table. The light on her phone had already gone out so she still could not see him (and the freaking lights were taking forever, too). "But what if I want to hear anyway?"

"Then that sucks."

"Pleeeeaase?"

She exhaled a short laugh through her nose. "No. In fact, why don't we switch over to you? You haven't said a word about yourself, except your weight."

"You want to know?"

"Mm-hmm." she murmured, and was very truthful.

He paused to breathe heavily, like one attempting to contain joy. "I'm a cop of the highest moral standing, I can say the alphabet backwards, I like being silly, and one of my favorite things in the world is beauty. Which sounds completely gay to anyone with no class, but I think the exact opposite of you."

Aww. This made her want to say a certain something, but she set neatly it down for now. "Aww, thanks. Please continue. What kind of beauty? Do you paint, maybe?"

"The only things I paint are my nails, love. Mostly I like to collect stuff." Madara replied airily. "A lot of it_ is_ paintings, but anything that's made well is worth it for me. I have paintings of dragons and antique fans, and abstract stuff that looks like spilled milk but I still like it. It's all very fun!"

Very fun, very fun, except it was silent between them again. Madara was doing his unnecessary pause for this thirty-second period and Sakura was straightening out a phrase that had been alternately building on her tongue and fleeing back into her mind like a total pussy for several minutes. She growled internally, kicked at it and forced it out: "I don't suppose you'd want to go out for a drink sometime?"

'_That's a stupid question!_' she thought the second it came out. '_What TV show did you copy that from? You don't even drink, you moron! What if he has a girlfriend already? What if he has smooth hands and painted nails, but also buck teeth or acne scarring? Am I too shallow to move past that if it's there? And if he says yes, what the hell would I do?_' _

"Of course. Of course I'd like to, Sakura."

'_Heeeelllll yeâ€'" _"If you like eating, we can do that, too."

"Eating? I love eating!"

'_I haven't felt like such a dumbass in yearsâ€|I haven't asked this question to anybody in yearsâ€|'_

The lights came on at that moment, but for the two sitting cozily in the interrogation room, it seemed like a flash bomb. The massively powerful fluorescent above them was doing its best of being a very

modern and very bright and headache-inducing light source. They managed to get adjusted and look up at about the same time, and both stared, openly.

The man Sakura had been talking to, Madara, loved beauty, perhaps because he was a picture of beauty himself. He was just the size he'd said he was, and clothed in a shirt far too casual and snug for policewear, that hinted at polished masculine features beneath. Madara also had red eyes, literally with red irises, which was impossible without a disease of some sort, (hadn't she seen some other impossible eyes today?) but with a slightly angular shape to them, and a teasing, cat's smile below that could probably get a lot bigger. And his hair was styled in a way she'd never seen, and with a piece of it covering a fraction of his face and eye, and she was running out of time to stare without seeming like a creeper, like Dasher.

But he was staring, too. So they were both creepers. The silly thought made her smile at him, and his look became nearly adoring. She had to make it stop. "You look very nice tonight."

"I can't believe it." He said softly, which made the female party of this couple come very close to squirming under the table. But he straightened up into normalcy and asked, "Well, we're done here. You can go home now. And you can see me tomorrow?" The last part very clearly had a question mark at the end of it, a hopeful one.

"I can see you Sunday." Sakura said a little sadly, and with embarrassment. After all, she had asked. "Tomorrow I'll be at the university all day and some of the night. Saturday I work, Sunday morning I work"

"So I have to see you when you're dead tired?"

"Psh! Med students don't need sleep!"

Madara chuckled at her, showing fine white teeth, and they stood up together. "I hear your car's been towed, though."

"Yeah, well I can"

"Let me drive you!"

Sakura's feet felt a little cold with sudden apprehension. Safety won out in the end, and she requested that he just take her to the nearest mechanic, where Ino's car was waiting. He made a face that looked remarkably like Eeyore, or so Sakura thought.

They left the interrogation room together, and from the moment he opened the door for her began to radiate the word "charming" like a glowing neon sign. He held her hand as they walked down the hall towards the area full of desks and moving people.

Not ten feet away, Ino sat cross-legged on her little bench, not bothered at all by a full blackout, and still primped and perfect-looking except for her completely gaping mouth. She watched her friend be led to an officer's desk—that of "Deputy Woods", according to the plaque—and be handed a paper and pen by the tall officer accompanying her. Sakura read this paper before signing, and found it to be a document of admittance for her using self-defense

against an attacker. He had already signed it in fancy, educated cursive: Madara Uchiha.

"Officer Uchiha, hm?" she murmured, giving her initials below his.

"Gaaawd, please don't call me that." He moaned like a despairing teenager. "It's soâ€¦formal. I won't have someone I like saying that." Sakura gave him the paper, which he tossed carelessly onto Woods' desk.

"My friend's over there." She gestured to her with her free hand before anything else could be said, and then put it safely back at her side in case he tried to take it.

Thank the lord Ino appeared at their side right then, completely out of nowhere. And her slack-jawed amazement was gone. She was ready to talk again. "So, hi, I'm Ino, I'm Sakura's best friend and the one who's going to pump her for information about this encounter later."

"But why would you do that when I can tell you right now?" Madara said, cocking his head at her. Ino's brows went up, and Sakura's hackles rose as she sensed danger. "See, your friend went in that room to talk about being assaulted, and she came out with a date. Right?" This statement was exact truth, and Sakura offered a chuckling, half-nervous and smiling word of agreement. It was a very sweet gesture, very cute, one might say, and upon seeing it, Madara said, "Yes," answering his own question, and he kissed Sakura where her pink hair blended to her forehead. Ino put her hands over her mouth and exhaled, and Sakura became like a high school girl at her first kiss: completely ceasing to exist right then.

But Madara was not quite finished showing off to them. He smiled almost every minute, it seemed, a great, pleased one that could possibly put Lee's to shame for its genuineness and brightness. He took them outside the station to a glinting black Mercedes, drove them to Jiffy Lube, where he left Sakura with another smile and exchanged phone numbers. When he finally drove around the corner and out of sight, Ino grasped Sakura's hand and dug her nails in.

"Sakura. That man. Is. _Gorgeous. _Explain to me how the fuck you found him."

Just a few degrees too giddy to not tell Ino to mind her own business for once, Sakura told her. She recited some conversation, even his Japanese words, told of his apparently painted nails, his work and had to stop to breathe. And when she was done, Ino put her hands together, clinking her two bracelets, and sighed. "I bet he's texting all his buddies and bragging about what a great girl he met tonight. I'm so happy for you."

* * *

><p>Sunday, April 13th, 12:23:337 PM, The Scene of the Truce.<p>

* * *

><p>"You fucker!"<p>

"Auugh!"

"How dare you? How _dare you._"

"Nnghâ€|Sasuke-chan, Iâ€"

"I should have known you would go out searching like some hungering pedophile. I should have sent out my associates to protect her from you. Madara, I am _this close _to shooting you in the face."

"Sasuke-chan, there's no need."

"No need? You little shit. Youâ€"

"Listen to me! I thought about this every waking moment these past few days. I could have shot _myself _in the face for all the grief it caused me."

"You think _you're _grieving?"

"Listen to me, Sasuke. I want to propose something to you, and I know I have no right to, but I want to try anyway. Essentially, it'sâ€|it's sharing."

* * *

><p>The Scene of the Connection, Sunday, April 12th, 1:44 PM<p>

* * *

><p>One weekend of all work and no play later, (and at another volunteer night shift, a weekend of dealing with a man who didn't know what a catheter was) Sakura Haruno left her work once her shift ended at one and went home to prepare herself, knowing she'd have to return later. More thoroughly than she had for a long time, she stood before a mirror and asked herself if she looked good, and a little voice inside her trilled like a bird when she told herself yes. Her sandals were appropriate for both activity and reclining, her shorts were new and quite eye-catching and she had a thin blue bracelet accenting her Hopkins tee, and she even dared to wear a little of the plum blossom perfume Ino had given her, her most treasured one.<p>

She turned around and observed herself like Ino often did, and wondered if this arrangement was too casual, not impressive enough for a police officer of the highest moral standing who loved beauty. What if it wasn't? What if he didn't like it? _'If he doesn't like it, he doesn't like it._' She thought immediately. _'And if he doesn't like _youâ€|_then_ _he doesn't like you, and life is back to normal._' _

Sakura's only mode of upping her confidence was to half-listen to a song on her iPod as she walked to the agreed meeting place, humming the tune in perfect sync. It was a pleasant walk to Harris Park, where Madara had wanted to meet.

Perhaps thankfully, she crossed the street into the park and saw her date almost immediately. He was facing away, twisting the cap off a

bottle of water and looking damnably good in a shirt that left his arms bare. He turned and saw her almost instantly and his face burst to life. His water bottle was thrown carelessly into a trash can, and he started walking, rather, jogging towards her.

The last time a six-foot-two man had come jogging towards her, Sakura had jogged forth, too, with the intention of punching him in the neck. She was very unprepared for Madara's arms bursting out to the side and embracing her before she could react. She started murmuring a little when her feet came slightly off the ground, but quieted when Madara's lips fell softly on her forehead.

"Good afternoon, sir." She said with great stiffness.

"It's a _great _afternoon, actually, ma'am. Would you like to spend it with me?" Madara told her, and proceeded to spend such an afternoon with her.

They managed to spend an hour walking the same quarter-mile track in the park, talking about everything from their favorite movies to shampoo, which included everything from Aussie and Redken to Shawshank Redemption and Lilo and Stitch (Sakura was astounded and delighted that the six-foot beast of a man next to her was a Disney fan, and much of their conversation revolved around this). After their tangent about adoring Finding Nemo, Madara caught Sakura looking at an unused tennis ball in the grass and asked if she might like to play a game with it. Sakura felt odd at the idea of playing some kind of sports game with a grown man, but what came out of her mouth was a most excited "yes."

They began playing something like racquetball against the wall of the brick restroom building, smacking the ball again and again with their bare hands. By playing this, each got to learn that the other very much detested losing, and while neither really played dirty to win, they most certainly played with vigor that bordered violence. And forty-nine minutes later, Madara was distracted and missed the hit; the ball sailed past him into the grass and the little audience they had gathered did a collective and enthusiastic, "OHHH!"

He did not mind losing the game; a look into his mind would have revealed that he in fact reveled in that one distraction, and much more. Madara did not reveal his thoughts, but did offer to take her out to dinner somewhere.

Sakura's inner calculator instantly began discovering just how long it had been since someone had asked her out to dinner. The answer was senior prom. Her response was: "Wellâ€|what time is it? Close to four?"

"I've gotâ€|four forty-eight. Something wrong?"

Only the job she was expected to return to in eleven minutes. "Y-Yes! I have to be at work really soon! Where's myâ€|okayâ€|" Madara was ignored as Sakura stuffed her phone back into her little bag and re-tied her shoes. Before her date's frowny face could settle in, she grabbed her things and ran up to him, and enveloped him in as great and powerful a hug as she could. Perhaps it was not such a surprise as she thought it'd be, as he returned it enthusiastically, forcefully.

Madara's smiling lips against her neck almost made her trip over her words, but she couldn't trip up now. "I haven't had so much fun in a long time. And my list of dates is embarrassingly short, but you easily top the list. You're a fantastic and very admirable guy—and I hope we're in a relationship now?"

"'Course we are!" he replied immediately, muffled a little by her hair. "I don't come across total perfection too often. Especially not adorable perfection. Someday I'm probably gonna hug you and just not let go, 'cause good fucking god, Sakura, you're wonderful." He kissed her cheek daringly close to her lips. An unknown little piece of Sakura asked him to try again and not to miss this time.

"Oh. Can't believe I forgot." And before anything else could be said, he slipped his phone out from his pocket and tapped the screen, taking a picture of Sakura from the shoulders up, trapped by one of his arms and the touch of a smile on her face.

She caught his own smile again, the big, silly one that bled affection and a little weirdness, her inner logistics department decided. It was _weird, _and his eyes were so weirdly black, like Dasher's eyes. Maybe he was...Blitzen. Yes. That was good for him. "Warn me next time. I don't want your phone to be full of me with weird faces."

"There will be lots of next times." He said quietly, and in the middle of the last word, his phone began ringing. Madara flipped it around in his hand and his face drooped like a beagle's. "Muhhh. My brother." One of his earlier conversation pieces had been two brothers, one younger and one quite older who was also a fellow police officer, but Sakura didn't have time to stay and find out which it was. Madara-Blitzen said, "Yeah, what?" into the phone in as bored a tone as possible and he grudgingly loosened his arm from her.

She could hear a little trace of his brother's voice as she took her first step away from him, a low and almost depressed voice muttering something that sounded like "a nine kitten" or "amok cunning", but she truly had no time left. Sakura started running on her second step away from her date—"boyfriend, said the loud and incessant part of her—and she ran to Mara's with just that thought in her head. She had a boyfriend now, and he was more perfect than anyone Ino had ever found.

At this thought, she snickered. '_Take that.' _

* * *

><p>The Scene of the Secret, Sunday, April 12th, 5:22:198 PM<p>

* * *

><p>"Sasuke-chan? I'm back."<p>

"Hn."

"Hm. I thought you'd be pitching a fit. I _did _after all, just come back from—"

"I know where you were, dumbshit."

"Kendall saw you on the street the other day, looking at her from across an intersection. Y'know, you can't just keep stalking her forever."

"Madara, I went downtown that day to buy shoes, because my favorite ones got holes _shot _into them last week at Germaine's rendezvous . I saw her there by chance. I just saw her. I saw her eyes."

"â€|Do you hate me for meeting Sakura first, Sasuke?"

"Yes. I know your plan and your good intentions. That doesn't make it feel okay for me."

"You need to meet her, Sasuke. She's wonderful. She's perfect."

"I _know._"

"Then why don't you go find some way to meet her already?"

"â€|"

"Well?"

"â€|ed."

"What'd you say?"

"I'm scared."

"You'reâ€|really? You're serious?"

"Suppose we meet and everything goes fine. We hang out more. We're a part of each other's lives. Someday I'll have to tell her how I first saw her. And she'll think I'm insane. And then I'll tell her about our family, and she'll think I'm a criminal and a monsterâ€|"

"You can't worry about that! She'll know us and feel the same, Sasuke. I feel it. Those things won't matter."

"I guess I thought like that before it really sunk in that telling a girl you glimpsed her out of your car window and then fell completely fucking in love, then _crashed _your car because you were looking at her and not the road, is absolutely mad. And then I'll have to add how my uncle saw her on a traffic camera video the next day and _somehow_ had the very same reaction, and how he told me this plan he had about us having this threesome relationshipâ€|"

"Okay, yes. I get it. Problemsâ€|"

"I can't believe I'm thinking so much about a woman I've never even directly met. I can't believe how firmly I know it's real."

"â€|"

"You've been with Sakuraâ€|you know her. We _will _have to eventually tell these things to her. She doesn't deserve to be lied to. What do you think she would say when we tell her this? Stop smiling like a

moron and answer me."

"Can't. 'Cause I'm thinking she might shoot us."

* * *

><p>God above, did I have to fight to write this one. I admit I'm rather disappointed with it. It's got about fifty to sixty percent resemblance to the first chapter I imagined in my head when I first thought of this storyâ€|in December of 2010! I've re-written it six times, yes, six times, since then. This is draft number four right here and we're gonna stick with this one because I am _so goddamn tired _of trying to get it right. It's impeding on my entire ability to write; I ended many nights staring at my ceiling, clenching my fists and murmuring to myself, "What do I do, what do I _do?" _I got very sick of it.

Well, as for what we've actually got hereâ€|I was surprised at myself for writing some MadaSaku in which Sakura actually admits (at least, to herself) that she really likes Madara. In most stories of this wacko pairing, she thinks he's clingy and annoying, loving intentions aside, and her opinion may just change to that laterâ€|but for now, we have the slightly-shy and dedicated med-student Sakura who really likes her (secretly!) mafia boyfriend. I'm also weirded out at writing Sasuke, any Sakura-paired guy, really who actually realizes his feelings for Sakura are, while genuine, obsessive and strange.

Alas, the mafia wasn't exactly present in this chapter, except for the sections that were only dialogue (omg who's "rattlesnake?"), and I promise, the mafia is going to get all up in your face soon enough! And Sakura will _not _rejoice. Of course, there are still other questions, like who were those guys, Greg and Troy? Why does Sakura suffer occasional bouts of insomnia? Where's Itachi, Shisui and Tobi? What is the Kingdom?

ALL SHALL SOON BE REVEALED.

Btw, this matters very little, but Sakura is attending a prestigious and very real medical university. Greg House went there ;D

End
file.